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A Lover's Ephemeris



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LOVER'S  
EPHEMERIS



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*A LOVER'S EPHEMERIS*

TO  
B.K.L.



✓  
**A  
LOVER'S  
EPHEMERIS**

By  
**Louis Lavater**

Author of "Blue Days and Grey Days."

**Commonwealth of Australia  
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## CONTENTS

### THE DARK HOURS

DUALITY . . . . .	Page 7
AT SUNSET . . . . .	" 8
WHITE MAGIC . . . . .	" 9
PRISONER'S CAPTIVE . . . . .	" 10
THE WITCHERY OF NIGHT . . . . .	" 11
DIVINATION . . . . .	" 12
THE DARKEST HOUR . . . . .	" 13
A DREAM VOYAGE . . . . .	" 14

### THE SHINING HOURS

THE AWAKENING . . . . .	Page 16
A THOUSAND TIMES . . . . .	" 17
HANDS, HEART AND THOUGHTS . . . . .	" 18
SEVEN REASONS . . . . .	" 19
LOVER'S LOGIC . . . . .	" 20
ATTESTATION . . . . .	" 21
THE MEASURE OF LOVE . . . . .	" 22
A GROOMSONG . . . . .	" 23



## DUALITY

**M**Y nature has been cast in such a mould  
That while I live I am the alternate prey  
Of two conflicting moods; no middle way  
Seems open to me till death leave me cold.  
I would be what I cannot be, would hold  
That which I cannot hold: then on a day  
I put aside all struggle, fret or fray,  
All quest of place or power or greed of gold.

I have been dreaming. I have plucked sweet flowers  
Of idleness, enjoyed what I love best  
Of book or brook or smile at passing jest—  
And now the fateful change before me lowers!  
This night shall I know neither sleep nor rest,  
But turn and turn and lash the laggard hours.

“There is a budding morrow in midnight.”

—JOHN KEATS.

## AT SUNSET

THE sun drops swiftly as a wounded bird,  
And careless clouds that all day long have lain  
Asleep at anchor in the aery main  
Now gather westward, grey-grown, gloomy, blurred,  
As summoned thither by his voice, unheard,  
Speaking in fire and answered so again:  
He looms majestic as the echoes wane,  
And night's dark utterance veils his glowing word.

My listening eyes are ears to catch the story:  
Thus every day some splendid hope must die,  
Each night the ineffectual stars be strewn;  
Or, lanterning the lonely waste of sky,  
Remembrance rise—that melancholy moon,  
That pale dead spectre of departed glory!

## WHITE MAGIC

**T**HROUGH clefts and crannies of the darkness glide  
The long white fingers of the pallid moon;  
She kneels upon the verge; then, rising soon,  
Casts her adrift and swims the sullen tide.  
And lo! the deeps where furtive shadows hide  
Are turned to wine-of-amber, senses swoon  
And weird imaginings but reach their noon  
Which drowned in darkness else had slowly died.

Beneath the beading surface, fathoms down,  
Do huddled houses lie, or in their place  
A ghostly semblance. There's no dwelling-space  
'Twixt wall and wall, but glimmery silver sheets  
Buttressed with ebony—a phantom town  
Where shrouded spectres goggle in the streets.

## PRISONER'S CAPTIVE

**L**IKE clumsy screed that mars a palimpsest  
My seeming life is but an overlay  
Upon a song that will not pass away  
Till all dissolve in death's pale alkhest.  
I hold a memory prisoned in my breast  
Too precious to set free, too fair to slay,  
Too eloquent to silence or gainsay:  
At once my bitter joy, my sweet unrest.

I dare not trust the warders—Hands or Feet  
Or Eyes or slippery Tongue—to be discreet;  
In loyal treason even Truth may err.  
When sleep their disaffection overpowers  
Then only am I free: in waking hours  
I am the captive of my prisoner.



## THE WITCHERY OF NIGHT

**B**EFORE the purple curtain of the night  
A silver-burnished lamp is hung, so near  
One's hand might almost touch it. I can hear,  
As though they muttered some mysterious rite,  
A drone of voices hushed and recondite;  
Dusk-haunting shadows breathe into my ear  
Dream-fancies, dead alas! for many a year  
(Or do they murmur "No, not quite—not quite?")  
Whilst thoughts, like sentient things, come from afar  
To soothe me with their silken fingers. Thus  
Hath night the witching power to soften and change  
Day's crude designs into the marvellous—  
Make distance intimate or known things strange,  
Blot out an ocean or unveil a star!

## DIVINATION

**S**LOW dies the midnight hour with muffled clang;  
Slow and by imperceptible degrees,  
Even as I strive to turn its treasured leaves,  
The book slides gently from my slackening grasp;  
Slow droops the flame within the shaded lamp  
And my soul drifts along the drowsy sea  
That laves the lonely island-shores of sleep  
Through twilights dim as when the world began.

At length, vaguely, as 'twere a dream outlined  
Upon a dream I see a faint shape grow  
Less faint than that which looms beyond . . . it shows  
Elusive as a moonray's misty shine  
In winter . . . Honey-cries hive in my throat  
And thy dear image trembles to a smile.

### THE DARKEST HOUR

**N**OW moonlight fails and the slow dark comes down  
In heavy flakes of silence, drifting deep  
Alike o'er valley and its watching steep  
And forest glade and field with furrows brown,  
Dulling the distant murmurs of the town  
And pressing tight the bandages of sleep  
On laughing eyes, perchance on eyes that weep—  
O'er half a world the night-drift slowly settles down.

And—do I dream? I know not. But this much  
I know: through shining distances enorme  
I wander hand in hand of a loved form  
Dearer than all (for there's no other such!)  
Unto a heaven where rosy-hued and warm  
Love reigns as king, and I am knighted at his touch.

## A DREAM VOYAGE

WHEN o'er night's dusky ocean swims the moon,  
Majestical although so wan and pale,  
And curious stars, wherewith the heavens are strewn,  
Gather to watch her gleaming silver sail;  
Then does my fancy grow to its full measure  
And count the stars as they were miser's treasure.

But, when I'd sum the tale of starry treasure  
Or clasp the silver splendours of the moon,  
They dance away in a wild witch's-measure  
Till fancy waxes as the white moon pale  
Drifting in tatters like a storm-torn sail  
Upon the shores of slumber to lie strewn.

Along the coasts of that dim island strewn  
What hoards must be of long-forgotten treasure!  
Whither our dream-barks drift with drooping sail,  
Where the low sky has neither stars nor moon  
But such as move and shine beyond the pale  
Of knowledge, and where time nor space has measure.

“One that in a silver vision floats.”

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

So in my heart are hopes I cannot measure  
That scatter from me as rose-leaves are strewn—  
Sweet-scented blossoms, petals pink and pale—  
How may I tell of such a priceless treasure?  
No dream like this beneath the witchèd moon  
Since my swift shallop spread her silken sail!

Hopes rustle gently in the flapping sail:  
It lifts—it fills! No need for further measure!  
What care I now for argent-wingèd moon  
Or wide-eyed stars along the heavens strewn?  
My ship is freighted with a dearer treasure  
Beside whose riches all their splendours pale.

Splendours of stars and of the moon grow pale  
When they behold my little shallop sail  
Unto that haven of the heart I treasure  
Above all earthly estimate or measure,  
Whose blisses like the hosts of heaven are strewn—  
Love! that endures beyond the stars or moon.

O white witch-moon my mast-head would impale;  
Stars silver-strewn, hid by the swelling sail—  
Ye cannot measure my uncounted treasure!

## THE AWAKENING

MORNING hath set his banner in the sky  
And flung his bright battalions' brave array  
Where'er night's frowning garrisons at bay  
Prolong resistance. See! they break, they fly!  
Whilst the loud birds, like feathered buglers, cry  
The matin-call that heralds the new day,  
Daring the dusky foe to say him nay  
When he deploys his white artillery.

Swiftly the fortress of my heart is taken,  
Its bastion breached and my pale prisoner free  
Whom to deliver hath enlargèd me;  
For this I gain by being so forsaken—  
No longer fettered to a gaoler's key  
Love's knight am I, and to his quest awaken.

“Morning, touched with quivering fire.”

—WILLIAM CALDWELL ROSCOE.



## A THOUSAND TIMES

..... and once again *I love thee!* All my soul  
Rushes impetuous to my widowed lips  
Whenas I snatch them from thy finger-tips  
To vow *I love thee!* On thy heart's white scroll  
I write these words *I love thee* for my whole  
Evangel, and around thy throat that dips  
Beneath thy bodice in a blue eclipse  
I draw *I love thee* like a silken stole.

Dear, the insistence of my love is such  
That I must needs rehearse it early and late;  
Nor weary not, for should it be my fate  
By some chance witchery of tone or touch  
To win thee with a word reiterate  
A thousand thousand times were not too much.

## HANDS, HEART AND THOUGHTS

**H**ANDS that shall busy them to ward away  
The world's rough elbow, and to win for thee  
Such garnered chattel-store from day to day  
As thou desirest or as need may be:  
Heart that shall hive or hold in loving-fee  
Thy kisses, tears, and all such precious plunder,  
That I may draw upon its treasury  
Should we be found some dreary day asunder:  
And thoughts—ah! thoughts that over thee and under  
And all about thee circling ever go,  
That never thus were freighted with sweet wonder  
And glad surprise until thou madest them so—

Thoughts do I give, heart's-fill of joy or weeping  
And both my hands into thy tender keeping.



## SEVEN REASONS

**W**HY do I love thee? Dear, for every reason  
That I may plead in starry courts above—  
Because God surely fashioned thee for love,  
As sweetest blossom hath most honey-bees on,  
And so to love thee not were worse than treason:  
Because thy call is throaty like the dove:  
Because thou'rt packed with sweetness as this glove  
With thee: because the year's at loving-season:  
Because, dear heart, thou askest why and why:  
Because thou lovest me (ah! blest am I  
Beyond all other lovers far or near):  
Because—well just because I love thee, dear:  
Or, having given thee good reasons seven,  
For any other reason under heaven.

## LOVER'S-LOGIC

**E**ARTH with a tender radiance all a-shine,  
New-caught from heaven as through an open door:  
A sun more golden-bright than e'er before:  
Night's winking lanterns burnished ne'er so fine:  
Heart brimming happiness like heady wine  
That rises to the lips and bubbles o'er:  
All these delights and many marvels more  
Three words may total—Beatrice is mine.

On Sundays, flaunting all their ribbons brave,  
I watch the lads and lasses as they go  
Exulting forth, or homeward linger slow,  
And smile indulgent on their shameless bliss:  
They love (thou sayest), they are beloved, they have  
Their heart's desire—but I have Beatrice.

## ATTESTATION

**D**EAREST, while this dull body worms its way  
From dark to dark through darkness how my soul  
For ever would pursue a separate goal  
With faintings, flutterings, doubtings yea or nay!  
What rosy ardours, what wan droopings grey  
Beset it! In what dismal night of dole  
Would it transcend its boundaries, paying toll,  
To win with thee unto the wide blue day!

Hear me, heart's-core of all things loveliest!  
This is my prayer—as I do now attest  
By faithful word in this fair-drawn indenture—  
I pray thy spirit compass me about  
Like a blue nooning, shadowless of doubt,  
When fares my soul upon its last adventure.

## THE MEASURE OF LOVE

WHO can appraise, who would with paltry yardstick  
measure

A great gift greatly given? And should that gift be love  
Stint not thy prayers, for it is holy far above  
Our cramp't imaginings. The miser counts his treasure  
By tale of meannesses; having no fruit, nor leisure  
To pluck it if he had: who travaileth to move  
A niggard mistress hath no need, by Heaven! to prove  
He oweth naught for dole of dearly-purchased pleasure:  
But thee—sweet-smelling thoughts of whom, like flowers,  
invade

The thickets of my soul where no spring used to be—  
Because thou givest all thine all ungrudgingly,  
Because thou squanderest great gladness, unafraid,  
Thee only will I love whilst there is breath in me  
Holding thee dearest of all things that God hath made.

## A GROOMSONG

**L**ET me be early, that no peeping sun  
Cry shame upon me for a laggard groom:  
Let me be risen and my day begun  
Before the sun hath set the hills a-bloom  
Or freed the faint perfume  
Of waking meadows. Let me leap from bed  
To bathe this body and these glowing limbs  
And utter all my soul in songs and hymns  
The like of which were never sung nor said  
Nor written to be read:  
And let me choose from garments in array  
The whitest linen . . . . and this suit of grey . . . .  
Whate'er be pleasing in the eyes of her  
For whose delight they have been laid away  
And sprinkled o'er with myrrh  
Rose-leaves and lavender  
Against this moment whereto I was born,  
The flower of all my days and my sweet marriage-morn.

“This is that happy morn.”

—DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN.

And forth into the open let me go  
To drink the breath of morning and to greet  
The shining messenger of love, that so  
I miss no joy of him, nor any sweet,  
Nor vex my happy feet  
With vain delays whenas his rosy fingers  
Are busy at day's door. See how he peeps  
Above yon eastern rim where still she sleeps  
Whose hour has come and mine; and how he lingers  
To wake the morning-singers  
Before her window ere he sweeps along  
His God-appointed road in majesty,  
Paling the ineffectual starry throng  
And scattering life and light and love and song  
So at the hour shall be  
A splendour about me,  
The golden splendour whereto I was born,  
The glory of my days and my sweet marriage-morn.



From water-runnel and from reedy stem,  
From quiring trees with leafy trebles crowned,  
From throats so many there's no counting them,  
From every hollow harbouring a sweet sound,  
Yea, even from the ground  
Rise murmurous madrigals that catch and croon  
And chime in many-changing harmonies,  
Wherein each rapturous voice with all agrees,  
And not a blade of grass is out of tune . . . .  
Almost my senses swoon  
As something in my heart responsive sings  
Through wildered quarter-tones and quaverings  
A song of ravishment and soul's-allure  
Such as is heard among the whispering strings  
Unearthly-sweet and pure  
Of a soft *viol d'amour*.  
This is the music whereto I was born,  
Fit for this day of days and my sweet marriage-morn.

I breathe the very air of heaven, laced  
With a sweet savour of supreme delight—  
Sweeter than is the cleanly salt sea-taste  
Of spray far-flung upon a windy height  
Or tangled reek at night  
Along the borders of an unspoiled stream:  
Sweeter than mint or flakes of manna spilled  
From sappy trees or fragrant earth fresh-tilled:  
Than spice of bay or coaxing of cool cream  
Or (fleeting as a dream)  
The gust of alpine strawberries. Could there run  
Into a swift alembic craftily  
The souls of all sweet things beneath the sun  
And all their essences be blent in one,  
Ah, not so sweet for me  
Their quintessence would be  
As this, the nectar whereto I was born,  
The honey-dew of days and my sweet marriage-morn.



It may be now she opens her dear eyes  
Misty with dreams and all suffused with love,  
And deepening bluely till a soft surprise  
Flutters into them like a nesting dove.  
Not the blue maze above  
With all its lure of endless veiled abysses  
Or foam of stars flecking a purple sea  
Can so entangle all the thoughts of me  
As those blue heavens, starred with a thousand blisses  
And bluer even than this is,  
And more mysterious and more full of wonder  
Than any watery lover of the moon . . . .  
Thus do my thoughts, like fountains burst asunder,  
Gather in flood and bear me up from under  
Till, rising swift and soon  
Unto a passionate noon,  
They reach the fullness whereto I was born,  
The spring-tide of my days and my sweet marriage-morn.

Or she may be already at her glass  
Perplexing hurried fingers with command  
And countermand. How many times shall pass  
Across the loving background of her hand  
Bracelet or brooch or band  
Ere to a scruple she assess the claims  
Of spidery clasp or quaintly-figured fretting  
Or mystic moonstone in a silver setting?  
How oft shall leap for her the tiny flames,  
Brightnesses without names,  
Imprisoned in the gleaming green and white  
Of her betrothal ring? Yet should there glow  
Upon her bosom gems and jewels bright  
As sunny shaft by day or stars at night  
The rarest could not show  
Such living radiance—No,  
She is the jewel whereto I was born  
Set in this day of days and my sweet marriage-morn.

Dear Love, when I look back upon the years  
Before my life was filled with thoughts of thee,  
The long climb but a little hill appears  
Lost in the blue of love's immensity,  
And like a cloud I see  
What once was all my world. How could I live  
Ere yet my life was worth the living? How  
Be prodigal of love as I am now  
When I was poor and little had to give?  
But this imperative  
Sweet ecstasy that wings my willing soul  
From peak to breathless peak (and ever shall  
Possess it in sustained high control  
Until it seek a yet diviner goal)  
Doth now exulting call  
Me to love's festival.  
This is the height whereunto I was born,  
The summit of my days and my sweet marriage-morn.

And so . . . . to church! Beloved, when at last  
The faithful word is spoken and the kiss  
The joyous marriage-kiss hath sealed it fast,  
Let us, remembering our unmeasured bliss,  
Thank God with tears for this  
Transcendent gift of love—the teasing strife,  
The uncertain joys of lovers’-love at first,  
Before the best in us hath slain the worst;  
Then the calm love of husband and of wife,  
Love that is more than life,  
Richer than kings’ crowns diamonded and pearled,  
Gentler than wild-buds in a dreamy lane,  
Prouder than a new nation’s flag unfurled,  
Love that is wider than the visible world  
And stronger than all pain—  
Whereby we now attain  
The heaven prepared for us when we were born  
Against this day of days and our sweet marriage-morn.



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